

Minutes
Board of Trustees Meeting
Chippokes Plantation Farm Foundation
2 p.m., Monday, November 25, 2002
Chippokes Mansion Conference Room

Present:

Mr. E.C. Michael Abley
Delegate William K. Barlow
Ms. Shirley Davis

Mr. E. Henry Doggett, III
Mr. Alan V. Monette

Absent:

Mr. J. Carlton Courter, III
Mr. W. Christopher Doss
Mr. Joe Elton (representing Mr. Maroon)
Mr. Robert M. Felts, Jr.
Mrs. Judy S. Lyttle

Mrs. Linda D. Morse
Senator Frederick M. Quayle
Dr. Peter B. Schultz
Delegate Mitchell Van Yahres
Mr. W. Bruce Wingo

Staff:

Ms. Danette McAdoo
Mrs. Donna S. Sharits

Mrs. Katherine R. Wright

Other:

Mr. John Soderberg

In Chairman Fred Quayle's absence, Vice Chairman Alan Monette welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

State Park Update

Mrs. McAdoo's report was moved up so that she could leave early for a meeting regarding the deer hunt on Tuesday. Her report is attached. The highlights of her report were:

1. The Southern Heritage Deer Hunt took place on Saturday, December 23, and yielded 18 deer. There are reservation hunts on Tuesday, November 26, and Tuesday, December 2.
2. On November 5, the voters approved the \$119 million General Bond Obligation Bond for State Parks and Natural Areas. Chippokes will receive \$4.6 million for replacement of the historic area's water system, repairs to the historic buildings, construction of a new maintenance area away from the historic barns where they are presently located, expand the campground by 12-15 sites and expand the pool concession to provide a camp store.
3. The annual volunteer recognition event took place November 2 and was a great success. This is a joint venture that honors the Park and Museum volunteers.

Comments From State Parks Director

Budget Crisis. The State Park system has had a long, hot, dry season with a record level of 7¼ million visitors. This is up from last year's visitation of 7 million. Our programs attendance was 200,000 over last year's 50,000. There were program fees, and there was concern that people would not come. However, what was discovered was that if they paid in advance, they would show up for the program.

The campground attendance increased 14-15%. For cabins, they have always been popular and relatively full. There was only a 3% increase. Park merchandise sold was a record \$655,000. Mr. Elton explained that when he became Parks Director, the sales were at \$40,000. The items sold are Virginia made or have the park logos. The increase in attendance can be contributed to our Gold Medal status, and that air travel is down.

The budget cut that you heard about hit us. There were 21 ½ vacancies and wages were reduced by \$500,000. This fiscal year, there was a reduction of \$1.6 million. Mr. Elton said that they deferred everything. For next fiscal year, it will be \$2.2 million. As you know, there will be another round in December when the Governor's budget is released December 20th. The General Assembly will then get to decide whether the Governor's recommendation is the right way to go. The job gets harder all the time. We are doing all that we can to keep the morale up.

All the House and Senate people that he has seen lately realize this is a very serious problem.

Guns in State Parks. About a year ago, the Attorney General issued an opinion, with the Governor's support, directing the Department to amend its regulation to allow the carrying of concealed handguns within state parks by holders of a valid Concealed Handgun Permit.

Some members of the public are now formally petitioning the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to consider two regulatory changes to the State Park Regulation on Firearms in Parks. One of these would effectively repeal the Department's existing regulation and thereby allow for open carry of any firearm in State Parks (unless otherwise restricted by law). The other proposal would amend the regulation to allow individuals to carry a holstered firearm openly in Virginia's State Parks.

We are presently in the middle of a 21-day public comment period to receive comments from interested Virginians on the proposals. At the end of the public comment period on December 9th, the Department has 90 days to issue a written decision to grant or deny the petitioners' requests to move forward with a regulatory process to possibly change the regulation.

In the 8½ years Mr. Elton has been the State Parks Director, he stated that he could not say we have a problem. They are doing a survey to determine if people feel less safe at parks. This may result in some legislation.

State Parks General Bond Obligation. Mr. Elton reported that there was a record 69% of the voters in support of the State Park Bonds. There was some opposition, but with the great by-partisan teamwork, we had a great success. Thanks to folks like Henry Doggett who played a role in getting the information out to the public. There were four counties that were not in support of the bond (Highland, Rockingham, Patrick and one other county.)

The question is how soon will we have some dollars? There is a limit of \$250 million of bonds to be sold each year, but this includes all bonds, not just state park bonds and higher education bonds. It is projected that the projects to be accomplished will be slower than anticipated. There may be \$20 million a year issued. The Finance Secretary will fund only acquisitions and projects that require no operating costs or revenues to support them. The Governor is required to submit how he plans to implement the bond package by January 15.

Mr. Elton stated he is a little pessimistic about how fast projects can be accomplished. At Chippokes, the water system is needed first. He is concerned about repairing the buildings and barns before 2007. He hopes to learn more during the General Assembly session. There should be a six-year implementation plan.

Mr. Abley remarked that it is so important to get these projects going by the interest rates are really low.

A negative comment Mr. Elton heard was you can't afford to operate what you have now. Others commented that the Tidewater area did not vote for the transportation bond because they did not think the money would go where it was supposed to go. An example they used is the Lottery Funds not going where it had been publicized to go. However, in the Code of Virginia for the Lottery, it did not spell out where the funds were to go.

Wilder Report. This report has released a draft, and it is posted on the Internet. A copy was in each Board folder. The report did target the Chippokes Foundation as follows: "Consider a merger of Chippokes Plantation into the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)." Mr. Doggett asked Mr. Elton if the Board would still exist if that happened. Mr. Elton stated that he did not think so.

Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002. The good news is that this act is in works. Mr. Monette made a comment about the lower cost of commercially constructed projects versus state projects. Mrs. Sharits explained that on the Governor's web page, there is an "Ask Why?" button. She encouraged Mr. Monette to send an e-mail. (the address is: www.state.va.us then click on the Governor's picture. The "Ask Why" button is on that page.)

Delegate Barlow asked Mr. Elton if he has heard where we can get revenue. Mr. Elton explained that he has not heard of any tax increases maybe due to the elections are coming up next fall.

Regarding the Foundation's Center project, Mr. Elton stated that it may be difficult to realize the dream, but encouraged us to see it through until we heard the Governor's budget. Then after the General Assembly Session in March or April of next year, we will see the handwriting on the wall. New projects will not do well.

The State Parks Foundation was created to accept gifts on behalf of the parks. But, there was a ruling that this Foundation was a quasi state agency and subject to the policies and rules like any other state agency. The friends groups are the most effective way since they have a 501-C3 status.

The Conservation Reserve Fund, which is the revenues from parking, cabins, campgrounds, has been frozen. They may not release the funds.

Delegate Barlow stated that Senator Miller is proposing a 4½-cent tax increase on gas. It was also mentioned that there is a proposal on cigarette tax to increase from 2 ½ cents to 20 cents that would bring in \$105 million.

Chippokes Farm Contract. Mr. Elton mentioned that Mr. Doggett had called him regarding the 25-foot buffer strip around the cropland. Mr. Elton explained that he understood the situation, but that DCR needed to be a model for conservation.

Financial Report

Mrs. Wright explained that there were two documents in the Board folders. The first document was a current financial statement, and the second document a budget.

For the financial statement, the Balance brought forward was: 09 Contributions Fund (to be called Dedicated Special Revenues) \$337,734.88; checking account \$16,756.71 and the 01 General Fund for this fiscal year is \$202,738.00 for a grand total of \$557,229.59.

The revenues for this fiscal year are: 09 Contributions Fund (to be called Dedicated Special Revenues) \$7,320.16, Checking Account 5,151.29 for a total of \$12,471.45.

Expenditures for this fiscal year are: 09 Contributions Fund (to be called Dedicated Special Revenues) \$9,313.78, Checking Account \$9,354.64, and 01 General Fund \$75,696.16 for a grand total of \$94,364.58.

The Balance brought forward is \$475,336.46. The Endowment Fund contains \$18,405.43 and a grand total of \$493,741.89.

Also included was a detailed report on the revenues and expenses in support of the summary sheet. The Endowment Fund report followed.

For the Budget, a copy of the Budget Bill for the Foundation was included. Mrs. Wright pointed out the budget for the 01 General Fund, and then pointed out the 09 Dedicated

Special Revenue budget which has been in the budget bill at this level for a number of years. The next page was the October 15, 2002 budget reduction by Governor Warner.

Then there was a page on the Foundation's budget limits. For the 01 Fund, the limit is \$202,738 for 2003 and \$195,455 for 2004. For the 09 Fund, the limit is \$67,103 for both fiscal years. Mrs. Wright explained that there was a budget reduction on the 09 Funds (Dedicated Special Revenues) only at the level of what appeared in the Budget Bill, not the total funds we have on hand.

Also attached were a proposed expenditure budget for the 2003 and 2004 fiscal years, and revenue projections for 2003 and 2004.

Site Comprehensive Plan

Mrs. Sharits passed out a drawing of the barn that Carlton Abbott faxed to her. There seems like an elephant in the room with the uncertainty of the budget. As Mr. Elton has indicated, we need to proceed with the plan.

At the last Board meeting, an ad hoc committee was appointed by Senator Quayle consisting of Henry Doggett, Judy Lyttle, Bob Felts, Pete Schultz, Alan Monette, Linda Morse, Donna Sharits, Kathy Wright and himself as ex officio. The Committee met on October 24 at Senator Quayle's office.

Carlton Abbott has provided very few additions to the project prior to the October 24th meeting. She explained that she was asked by the committee to communicate to Mr. Abbott the need for elevations, floor plans or some level of renderings for the following:

Pier	Domestic Animal Barn
Amphitheatre	Weather Center
Farm and Forestry Museum	Education Center (Drawings are complete)
Forestry / Nursery Exhibit	

As of this date, a faxed copy of the animal barn has been received.

The last item on his contract is a presentation to the Art and Architectural Review Board on Friday, December 6. We will have a PowerPoint presentation from him.

Budget Figures. To provide some budget figures of the construction, Mrs. Sharits explained that she was asked to see if the Design and Construction Section could provide this service. She met with John Davy, the Director of Planning and Recreation and Scott Gagnon, Director of Design and Construction. The Design and Construction Section is willing to work with us on these figures after Mr. Abbott completes his contract. A timeline will also be prepared.

Mrs. Sharits stated that the 1999 feasibility study had no substantial data regarding how the Chippokes Foundation will manage the Center's overhead, how the center will be staffed and what the public is willing to pay for such an attraction.

Business Plan. It was decided that that we should obtain an outside consultant to research these factors to help us write a business plan. She was asked to look into contracting with VA Tech, VCU or some other Virginia University or college with expertise in developing a viable business plan. Senator Quayle was to check with Christopher Newport University to see if they offered such services, and Mr. Monette suggested the marketing folks at Busch Gardens as a resource.

Mrs. Sharits has made some initial inquiries and Longwood was suggested. Also, she will be working with Stuart McGinnis in December regarding an agricultural speaking engagement to communication officers. At that time, she will get his input from VA Tech. Mr. Monette stated that we need to have the agricultural and forestry schools involved as well as the business school.

At the present time, we need to submit a monthly spending plan for approval prior to each month. The earliest we can be included on the next round of approvals is for the January plan.

Public/Private Partnership. A meeting needs to be scheduled with Joe Maroon and Fred Fisher, the Assistant Attorney General and members of the Board who would like to participate, to get more details on this new law.

Development Report

Over 100 people have given contributions in the past 12 months. We cannot thank people enough. Mrs. Sharits explained that she is asking the Board members to call or write to thank them. When talking with them, it is important to answer their questions. This is our core group that can help us. She asked each Board member to make 6-8 phone calls. She also provided note cards and a sheet that needs to be returned back to her. These people would be thrilled to hear from a board member.

Delegate Barlow asked about conservation groups that may be potential donors. Mr. Monette mentioned Don Wells as being a source of information regarding conservation groups. Mr. Wells was the former Director of the Division of Soil and Water, and former assistant director of DCR.

Mr. Doggett stated that it is extremely important to get Surry County residents on board for this project.

Museum/Foundation Report

Mrs. Wright reviewed some statistics about the museum covering museum attendance, programs, museum store sales and volunteers. See the attached report. Also, there is an updated museum visitor tracking report on how visitors heard about the museum.

She also explained that we are losing two part-time employees—Vicki Sylvester, the Volunteer Manager, and Cami Brooks, the Museum Store Manager. They will be

winding up their work completing year-end reports and packing the store inventory for the winter during December.

We receive letters from time to time from individual or groups. One particular letter we just received, Mrs. Wright explained, she wanted to share with you. (Attached).

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine R. Wright
Executive Secretary

Attachments:

1. State Park Report
2. Wilder Report Draft
3. Financial Report dated November 18, 2002
4. Budgets for 2003 and 2004 Fiscal Years
5. Barn Drawing for Center
6. Museum Statistics Report for 2002
7. Visitor Tracking Report for 2002
8. Customer Letter